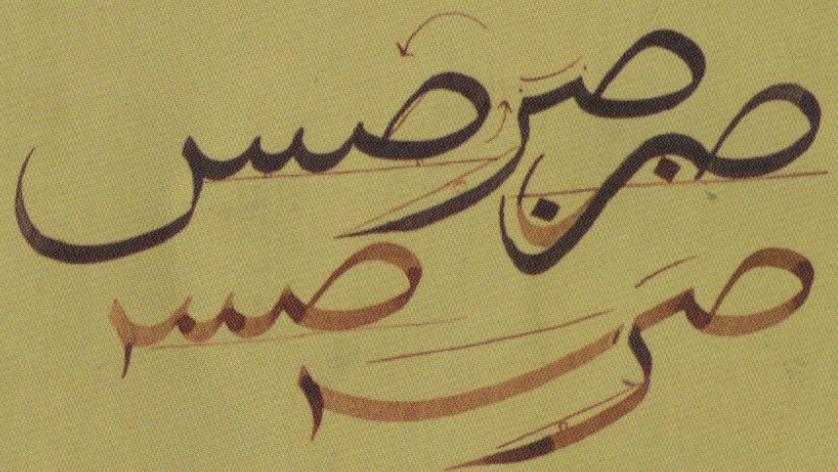


INSTRUCTION  
of the STUDENT  
The Method of Learning



Foreword by  
HAMZA YUSUF

*Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tarīq al-Ta'allum*



INSTRUCTION of the STUDENT  
The Method of Learning



*He who seeks pearls immerses himself in the sea.*

—al-Mutanabbi

INSTRUCTION *of the* STUDENT  
The Method of Learning

by  
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## TRANSLITERATION KEY

ء	ء (1)	ر	r	ف	f
ا	ā, a	ز	z	ق	q <sup>(12)</sup>
ب	b	س	s	ك	k
ت	t	ش	sh	ل	l
ث	th <sup>(2)</sup>	ص	ṣ <sup>(6)</sup>	م	m
ج	j	ض	ḍ <sup>(7)</sup>	ن	n
ح	h <sup>(3)</sup>	ط	ṭ <sup>(8)</sup>	ه	h
خ	kh <sup>(4)</sup>	ظ	ẓ <sup>(9)</sup>	و	ū, u, w
د	d	ع	c <sup>(10)</sup>	ي	ī, i, y
ذ	dh <sup>(5)</sup>	غ	gh <sup>(11)</sup>		

مentioned after the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ name and is translated as "God bless him and grant him peace."

مentioned after the names of the Prophets and is translated as "peace be upon him."

1. A distinctive glottal stop made at the bottom of the throat. It is also used to indicate the running of two words into one, e. g. *bismi'Llāh*.  
Should be pronounced like the *th* in *think*.
2. A hard *h* sound made at the Adam's apple in the middle of the throat.
3. Pronounced like the *ch* in Scottish *loch*.
4. Should be pronounced like the *th* in *this*.
5. A slightly trilled *r* made behind the front teeth which is trilled not more than once or twice.
6. An emphatic *s* pronounced behind the upper front teeth.
7. An emphatic *d*-like sound made by pressing the entire tongue against the upper palate.
8. An emphatic *t* sound produced behind the front teeth.
9. An emphatic *th* sound, like the *th* in *this*, but made behind the front teeth.
10. A distinctive Semitic sound made in the middle throat and sounding to a Western ear more like a vowel than a consonant.
11. A guttural sound made at the top of the throat resembling the untrilled German and French *r*.
12. A hard *k* sound produced at the back of the palate.
13. This sound is like the English *h* but has more body. It is made at the very bottom of the throat and pronounced at the beginning, middle, and ends of words.



## FOREWORD

THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY IS ONE ROOTED IN THE CONCEPT OF *adab*, which is usually glossed by translators as "courtesy." But indeed, it is much more profound in its scope, for *adab* also signifies "erudition" and, in certain academic contexts, the "humanities." The idea is that the man of letters is one who puts words in their "proper" place, and this nuance resides in the essence of the word *adab*. In the Arabic language, the imperative or command mood is the same as the mood used for requests without any difference other than the tone of voice of the person giving the command or making the request. Arabic grammarians remark that the difference is whether the one employing the mood is over or under the one being commanded or requested, that is, whether one is in a position of authority or subject to authority. What this implies is that people are aware of their place in a hierarchy. We now live in a time when "hierarchy" is a tabooed word. The idea of one being over another is an anathema to modern man; but to the ancients, this was a sign of good breeding. After all, how could a pious scholar be equated with an ignorant man? The Quran asks, *Are they the same—those who know and those who do not know?* (39:9). An answer is not given in the verse. According to the rhetoricians, none is needed because the answer is obvious.

Our Prophet ﷺ said, “I was commanded to treat people according to their stature.” This in no way negates the statement of the Prophet ﷺ that “people are equal like the teeth of a comb.” In the light of Sacred Law, all people are equal, but in their accomplishments and divine success (*tawfiq*), they differ markedly. And should such differences ever cease, then humanity is endangered: “You will continue to be healthy as a society as long as you have degrees of excellence, but should you all become the same, you will be destroyed,” said the Prophet ﷺ. This profound hadith implies that the leveling of accomplishments, knowledge, and talents in a society, by its very nature, is a sign that excellence is removed from human works. This is the modern age of nihilistic leveling.

Excellence is removed from our schools by dumbing down the students and leveling them to functional illiterates. It is removed from our politics because those chosen to lead are mainly those who covet it and not those who are morally, intellectually, and spiritually qualified for office. At the root of the Islamic tradition, however, there is *adab*, and at the root of *adab* is knowledge acquired painstakingly at the hands of those who know. Muslims, unlike many modern non-Muslim relativists, believe that knowledge is not only absolute but is a gift from God to man, beginning with the first man and continuing until today in an unbroken chain of prophetic dispensations. What behooves men and women of every generation is to learn this knowledge and exert themselves to the utmost in order to understand it and apply it in the context of their society and its particular needs. To learn this knowledge—which in itself leads to *adab* (or proper comportment) with Allah, His Messenger, and Allah’s creation—one requires a modicum of *adab* at the outset. This is the core subject of this book: what a teacher and a student need to know in order to render fruitful the process of learning and teaching. In reality, it is Allah who is the true Teacher; and both the mortal teacher and student are indeed learners on a shared journey. For the Muslim, knowledge is not ultimately taken from men but

from the Maker of men and from His beloved Prophet ﷺ, who is a man but not like other men, in the same way a ruby is a stone but not like other stones.

In the early history of Islam, the men and women of sacred knowledge were able to take directly from the sacred texts of the Quran and Hadith without recourse to others except for the purpose of ascertaining the veracity of the transmission of the Prophet’s statements and to learn the primary texts. As time passed, spiritual aspirations waned and people lost the ability to even master the vehicle of the Arabic language to a level that enabled one to fully understand the texts. As such, knowledge became codified in secondary and then tertiary texts, and men became keys to understanding those texts. There is something deeply unsatisfying about studying secondary texts, and, even worse, tertiary texts. Children who are at the first stage of learning mathematical symbols cannot read Euclid’s *Elements*. Similarly, a child learning basic vocabulary cannot jump directly to understanding Shakespeare’s sonnets. The Arabs say, “The food of adults is poison when given to children.” We are indeed spiritual and intellectual children, and until we mature through learning and mastering our own tradition, we can not safely trust ourselves to delve into primary texts for other than blessings and moral guidance. Legal guidance taken directly from texts is only permissible when one has reached the highest level of intellectual mastery in the Islamic scholarly tradition.

The reprinting of this book is a start in that direction and should be learned at the outset of one’s journey. I personally first read this text as a young student of sacred law in the United Arab Emirates over eighteen years ago and took it with me on my journey to the land of Chinqit and the Maghrib to study with men who embodied its meanings. I still read it from time to time and am reminded of its permanent relevance to the lifelong learner, which is, in fact, one of the defining characteristics of being a Muslim: “Learning is from the cradle to the grave,” said our beloved Prophet ﷺ. (We are only

recently coming to understand the profound implications of that statement in light of recent neurological breakthroughs concerning how the brain learns from the outset of birth until death when the proper stimuli for learning are given.)

Our Muslim nation is suffering from ignorance and nothing more. Ignorance, moreover, is a permanent status if *adab* is lost. In the West, scholars are still honored with endowments to continue their research unfettered by the concerns of such mundane things as rent and the price of onions. Unfortunately, in the Muslim world, some of our greatest scholars are impoverished and forced to take undignified jobs with tyrannical governments, thus losing their freedom and their respect among the people. Endowments that once acted as social security for students and teachers all over the Muslim world have been usurped by the ministries of endowments. Our *madrasas* are now museums; our teachers are mere employees; and our students of sacred law no longer come from the intellectually gifted sons and daughters of our community but rather from uneducated families motivated by the possibility of securing the job of *imām* in a government *masjid*. This is often coupled with a mentality of extreme poverty and a crude desire for the empty stuff of this world.

Our Prophet ﷺ said, “True wealth is the wealth of the soul.” There is no doubt that in order to maintain his dignity with Allah and then with men, a scholar must have a rich soul with no dependencies on man. On the other hand, our Prophet ﷺ said, “Poverty is nearly a type of disbelief.” No scholar should live in poverty unless he so chooses, and no student sincere in his studies should suffer the concerns of material well-being. The way out of this is two-fold. First, the teachers and students must purify their intentions and be sincere in making their pursuits purely for the sake of Allah and for the honor of His beloved Messenger’s community. Allah has promised that those who have piety will be provided for whence they did not expect. They must also heed the

advice of Sīdī Aḥmad Zarrūq who says in his book *al-I‘āna*, “Never expect anything from the creation of Allah, but rather expect things from the Creator, Allah.” Second, businessmen and other people of means must reinvigorate our endowments, particularly in places where the hand of the government cannot reach and does not usurp. This is certainly the case in the West, and this book should be a starting point for the revival of this Islamic intellectual tradition that has always been the preamble to Islamic Renaissance; and we have 1400 years of history to prove this point.

HAMZA YUSUF



## AUTHOR'S PROLOGUE

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, THE MERCY-GIVING. ALL PRAISE is for God who favored the Children of Adam with knowledge and responsible action [*amal*] above all creation; and may God's blessings and peace be upon Muḥammad, the master of the Arabs and non-Arabs, and upon his Family and his Companions from whom knowledge and wisdom spring.

I have observed in our day many students of learning striving to attain knowledge but failing to do so and are thus barred from its utility<sup>1</sup> and fruition. This is because they have missed the [proper] methods [of learning] and have abandoned its conditions. Anyone who misses his way goes astray and, therefore, does not reach [his] objective, however modest or glorious.

It is my desire here to elucidate the proven methods of study that I myself had either read about in books or heard from my learned and wise teachers. It is my hope that those sincerely interested in this matter would pray for my deliverance and redemption on the Day of Judgment.



## CHAPTER ONE

### *The Nature and Merit of Knowledge and Learning*

THE MESSENGER OF GOD ﷺ SAID, “THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE IS incumbent upon every Muslim man and Muslim woman.” But it is not obligatory for every Muslim to seek all [aspects of] learning, but seek only that which relates to one’s standing. It is said that the most meritorious knowledge is that in keeping with one’s standing, and the most meritorious action is to maintain one’s standing. It is necessary for the Muslim to strive for as much knowledge as he may need in his standing whatever this may be. Since one must perform Prayers [Salāt], he must know enough about the Prayer ritual that will help him acquit himself of his obligation. Knowledge of his [other] religious obligations is likewise incumbent upon him, for whatever leads to the fulfillment of a duty is itself a duty and what leads to the establishment of an obligation is itself an obligation. This applies to Fasting; paying Zakāt [prescribed charity] if one possesses wealth; and the Pilgrimage [to Makkah] when one is under obligation to perform it. It also applies to trading goods if one is engaged in commerce.

It was once said to Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan,<sup>2</sup> “Will you not compose a book on asceticism?” He replied, “I composed a book on commerce,” meaning that the [true] ascetic is he who is careful

to protect himself against dubious and unsanctioned practices in commerce. The same applies to all other occupations and professions. Anyone who works in a given [field] is dutybound to learn how to guard against what is forbidden therein. This is also obligatory with knowledge of the conditions of the heart, such as complete reliance on God, repentance, fear, satisfaction [with God’s decree]—for this applies [to people] of every walk of life.

The nobility of learning is not foreign to anyone, since it is something peculiar to all humankind. With the exception of knowledge, people—as well as animals to some degree—are associated with several virtues, such as valor, courage, strength, generosity, and compassion. Learning, however, is the exception. Through it, God revealed the preeminence of Adam ﷺ over the angels whom He commanded to prostrate themselves before [this first human]. Learning is indeed noble, for it leads to a fear of God which entitles [the believer to receive] God’s benevolence and eternal bliss [in the Hereafter]. In this vein, Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan Abū ‘Abdallāh said:

Learn! for learning is an adornment for one who possesses it, a virtue and a prelude to every praiseworthy action. Profit each day by increasing [your] learning and swimming in the seas of beneficial knowledge. Give yourself up to the study of jurisprudence, for the knowledge of jurisprudence is the best guide to piety and the fear of God, and it is the straightest path to the ultimate goal. It is the milestone leading to the ways of proper guidance; it is the fortress that saves one from all hardships. Indeed, one godly person versed in jurisprudence is more powerful against Satan than a thousand [ordinary] worshippers.

Likewise, [knowledge impacts] all other human characteristics, such as: generosity and avarice; cowardice and courage; arrogance and humility; chastity; prodigality and parsimony; and so on. For arrogance, avarice, cowardice, and prodigality are illicit. Only through knowledge of them and their opposites is protection

against them possible. Learning, then, is prescribed for all of us. Sayyid Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū'l-Qāsim composed a book on ethics—and a most excellent book did he compose!<sup>3</sup> It is necessary for every Muslim to keep it in mind.

As for learning [the rules that apply to] situations that arise only in certain occasions, this is a “collective duty,”<sup>4</sup> meaning, when some people fulfill it in a given place, all the other people are excused from this [duty]. But if no one fulfills it, the sin [resulting from this omission] falls on the whole community. It is for the leader, then, to direct and for the community to follow the fulfilling of this [obligation].

It has been said that knowledge of those things that affect a person under all conditions holds a position similar to food: no one can dispense with it. But knowledge of matters affecting a person only in certain occasions, this holds a position equivalent to medicine, which is needed only at stipulated times. But knowledge of astrology holds a position equivalent to disease; its study is prohibited because it is harmful and brings no benefit. It is impossible to flee from the decree of God and His dispensation, [which astrology deals with].

Every Muslim is expected to occupy himself at all times with the remembrance of God the Exalted and with His invocation and supplication; with reading the Quran; giving charity, which wards off calamities; asking for forgiveness and safety in this world and the next. This is so God may shield one from trials and tribulations. For he who is granted [the gift of frequent] invocation will not be denied a favorable response. If calamity is decreed to him, it will inevitably befall him, but God will make the [tribulation] easier for him to bear and will give him the patience by virtue of the invocation.

[Astronomy is discouraged] with the qualification that one is permitted to study just enough of it to determine the *qibla* and the times of Prayer.<sup>5</sup> The study of medicine is allowed because it

deals with accidental causes. Therefore, its study is allowed as is [the study] of other worldly necessities.<sup>6</sup> The Prophet himself ~~had~~ treated himself medicinally. It is related that al-Shāfi‘ī<sup>7</sup> said that science has two branches: the science of legal doctrine, which pertains to religious matters [*adyān*], and the science of medicine, which pertains to bodies [*abdān*]. As for commenting on matters of learning, it is a means through which the nature of a propounded subject may become clear.

Jurisprudence is the science of the fine points of knowledge. Abū Ḥanīfa<sup>8</sup> said, “Jurisprudence is a person’s knowledge of his rights and duties.” He said further, “The purpose of learning is to act by it, while the purpose of action is to abandon the fleeting [things of this life] for what lasts forever.”

So one must never be heedless of his soul or of what benefits or harms it in this life and in the next. Hence, man must seek out what is useful, while avoiding what is harmful to the [soul], lest his intelligence and his knowledge become weapons against him [in the Hereafter] and thus his punishment is increased. May God preserve us from His wrath and His punishment.



## CHAPTER TWO

### *The Purpose of Study*

INTENTION IS NECESSARY IN THE STUDY OF ANY DISCIPLINE, SINCE every deed is rooted in intention, as attested to in the words of the Prophet ﷺ, “Deeds [are measured] by their intentions.” This is an authentic tradition. The Messenger of God ﷺ also said:

How many are the deeds which bear the image of the deeds of this world but then become—through their good intention—among the deeds of the Hereafter! And how many are the deeds which bear the image of the deeds of the Hereafter but then become—through their evil intention—among the deeds of this world!

It is necessary for the student in his quest for knowledge to strive for the pleasure of God, the abode of the Hereafter, the removal of ignorance from himself and from the rest of the ignorant, the revival of religion, and the survival of Islam. For the survival of Islam depends on knowledge. And the disciplined life and piety are not complete when there is ignorance.

Imām Burhān al-Dīn,<sup>9</sup> author of the *Hidāya*,<sup>10</sup> recited a poem by an unnamed author:

An immoral man of learning is a great evil;  
yet a greater evil is an ignoramus leading a godly life.  
Both are a great trial everywhere  
to whomever clings to his religion.

One must intend [with knowledge] to be thankful [to God] for a healthy mind and a sound body; one should not, however, [intend] to attract people toward himself, or reap the vanities of the world, or obtain honors from the king, and the like.

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan said, “If the people, all of them, were my slaves, I would emancipate them and free myself from being their patron.” This is because he who finds pleasure in knowledge and in acting according to it, rarely does he desire man’s [worldly] possessions.

Imām Qiwām al-Dīn Hammād ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ismā‘īl al-Šaffār al-Anṣārī<sup>11</sup> recited a poem by Abū Ḥanīfa:

Whoever strives for knowledge for the Hereafter  
obtains great gain in righteousness.  
But he is in utter loss who seeks [knowledge]  
to obtain advantage over people!

[This is true] with the possible exception of one who seeks position in order to command what is good and forbid what is evil, and in order to promote the truth and strengthen religion—but never in order to satisfy one’s ego and desires. [The repression of selfish aims] becomes more possible the more [the learned] undertakes to enjoin what is good and forbid evil.

It is essential for one who strives for knowledge to reflect on this. One should seek knowledge with great [personal] assiduity and not apply it to this base, small, and perishable world. [As the poet said]:

This world is more worthless than the worthless,  
and its lover is baser than the base.  
It renders people deaf by its magic and makes them blind  
so they become perplexed with no guide.

It behooves one who seeks knowledge not to debase himself by desiring what should not be desired; and [it behooves him] to abstain from that which degrades learning and its bearers. One should also be modest, for modesty lies between arrogance and self-abasement.

Chastity, too, is like this. This can be learned from [the book] *Kitāb al-Akhlāq* [A Treatise on Human Character].

Imām Rukn al-Islām,<sup>12</sup> who is known as al-Adib al-Mukhtār, recited for me a poem that he himself composed:

Indeed, modesty is a quality of the God-fearing,  
and by it do the pious ascend [to sublime heights].  
A wondrous thing is the wondering of the ignorant  
about his condition, whether he is happy or wretched.  
Or [his wondering] about how his life will end, or whether his soul  
on the day [of his death] will descend or ascend.  
Truly, pride belongs to our Lord, an attribute  
peculiar to Him. So avoid it and fear God.

Abū Ḥanīfa yet said to his companions, “Make your turbans ample and enlarge your sleeves.” He said this so that scholarship and its bearers will not be slighted [by people]. And it is compulsory for him who seeks knowledge to acquire the *Kitāb al-Waṣīyya* [The Bequest], in which Abū Ḥanīfa wrote to Yūsuf ibn Khālid al-Samī<sup>13</sup> when he returned to his people. Our late teacher, ‘Alī ibn Abī Bakr [al-Marghīnānī], commanded me to write out [*Kitāb al-Waṣīyya*] upon returning to my country, which I did. He who teaches higher levels of knowledge and he who gives legal opinions [*muftī*] cannot dispense [with this book] in his dealings with people.



## CHAPTER THREE

### *The Choices in Learning*

WHEN UNDERTAKING THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE, IT IS NECESSARY to choose among the branches of learning those that are the most beneficial to oneself. One should [also] select what is essential according to the stage one has reached in his religious development. And finally, [one should] choose what will be essential to one in the future. [With this, the individual] will perfect himself in the knowledge of the oneness of God and learn about God the Exalted through [sound] evidence, for the faith of one who blindly follows authority, even though it may be correct in our view, is still defective because of his failure to seek out proofs.

It is essential to choose established traditions before new things. It is said, “Cleave to established traditions, while avoiding new things.” Beware of becoming engrossed in those disputes which come about after one has cut loose from the traditional authorities. For [such dispute] keeps the student away from knowledge, wastes away his life, and leaves him with [nothing but] solitude and hostility. [The prevalence of dispute] is one of the indications of [the coming of] the Hour<sup>14</sup> and is the annihilation of knowledge and doctrine. This is supported by a statement [of the Prophet ﷺ].

Regarding the choice of a teacher, it is important to select the

most learned, the most pious, and the most advanced in years. In this way did *Abū Hanifa* chose *Hammād ibn Abī Sulaymān*<sup>15</sup> after due deliberation and reflection. He said, "I found him venerable, with a serious mien, gentle, and patient." He [also said], "I was on safe ground with *Hammād ibn Abī Sulaymān*, and [under him] did I grow." Then he stated: "I heard a sage from *Samarqand* say, 'Indeed, one student consulted me about seeking knowledge, and [after the consultation] he decided to take a journey to *Bukhāra* in order to acquire learning [there].'"

It is necessary to ask advice in all matters. Indeed, God Almighty commanded [even] His Messenger to seek counsel, although there was no one more intelligent than the Prophet ﷺ. Nevertheless [the Prophet ﷺ] was instructed to consult with others. So indeed, he sought advice from his Companions in all affairs including domestic matters. 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib<sup>16</sup> stated, "No man ever perished from seeking advice." It is said [that people are divided into the following]: a man, a half man, and nothing. A man is one who is of sound judgment and consults [others]. A half man is one who is of sound judgment but does not seek advice, or seeks advice but is not of sound judgement. One who is nothing is a person who is neither sound in judgment nor one who seeks advice. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq<sup>17</sup> said to *Sufyān al-Thawrī*,<sup>18</sup> "Seek advice in your affairs from those who are God-fearing. The quest of knowledge is among the most exalted and difficult tasks; thus seeking advice [in acquiring knowledge] is most important and urgent."

*Al-Ḥakīm* [al-Samarqandī]<sup>19</sup> stated, "If you come to *Bukhāra*, do not hasten between various learned masters. Rather, be patient a couple of months until you reflect concerning the choice of a teacher." For if you come to a learned man and begin to study with him right away, his teaching may often not be to your liking. [If this is the case] you leave him and move on to another teacher. But no blessing will come to you by taking up your studies in this

manner. So reflect two months about the [right] choice of a teacher and seek advice so that you do not have to leave and withdraw from him. [It is better] that you remain with him until your studies have prospered and you profit a great deal from the knowledge you have attained.

Know that patience and perseverance comprise the foundation of all [important] matters, but these [two qualities] are rare, as it is said in a verse [of poetry], "The effort in the attainment of glory wearies / but persistence is rare among men."

It is said that courage is having endurance for [even] one hour. Hence, it is necessary for the pursuer of knowledge to be firm and exert patience with his teacher and his text so as to not abandon [his studies] incomplete. [Also exert patience] with one discipline in order not to be distracted by another before the first is completed. [Likewise have patience] with one land so as to not migrate to another unnecessarily. For all these changes disturb one's affairs, preoccupy the heart, lose time, and injure the teacher.

It is also essential to be strong in abstaining from what one's soul and desires bid one to do. A poet said, "Indeed, desire is baseness in its essence, / and the victim of any desire is the victim of baseness." So be patient in calamity and affliction. It is said, "The treasure of good bounty lies on the arches of calamities." I recited a poem which is said to be by 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib:

The pursuit of knowledge is not carried on without six things  
which I shall inform you of through words that are clear:  
Ingenious acumen, fervent desire, patience, sufficient sustenance,  
guidance of a teacher, and length of time.

As to the selection of one's companions, it is necessary to choose one who is diligent, religious, and gifted with a good character and understanding; and flee from one who is indolent and negligent, verbose, corrupt, and a troublemaker. It is said in a verse of poetry:

Do not inquire about a man, but observe his companion,  
for indeed one companion imitates the other;  
And if the companion is evil, then quickly shun him,  
but if [the companion] is good, then associate with him.  
In this way you will be led in the right direction.

Another poem was recited to me:

Do not associate yourself with a companion indolent in his ways.  
How often through the corruption of another man is a pious man  
corrupted?  
Contagion spreads quickly from the lazy to the [lively] one,  
just as when one places a [burning] coal in ashes, the fire is allayed.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Everyone born [into the world] is born in *fitrā* [natural state of belief], until his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.” And it is said according to the wisdom of the Persians:

A bad friend is worse than an evil snake,  
[I swear] by the pure essence of the Eternal God!  
A bad companion leads you toward Hell;  
take a good companion in order to secure success.<sup>20</sup>

And it is said:

If you truly seek knowledge from those who possess it,  
or from a witness who tells you about what you know not;  
then appraise the country by its reputation  
and the companion by his companion.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Respecting Knowledge and Those Who Possess It*

KNOW THAT IN THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE, ONE DOES NOT acquire learning nor profit from it unless one holds knowledge in esteem and those who possess it. So one [must] esteem and venerate the teacher. It is said that he who attains knowledge does not do so except through respect, while he who fails [in this goal] does so only by ceasing to respect and venerate learning and its bearers. It is stated that respect is preferable to obedience, for you do not perceive a man becoming an unbeliever through his rebellion [against God's revelation], but by [his] mocking of it and by discarding reverence [for it]. One aspect of venerating knowledge consists in holding the teacher in esteem. 'Alī [ibn Abī Tālib] said: “I am the slave of him who teaches me one letter of the alphabet. If he wishes, he may sell me; if he so desires, he may set me free; and if he cares to, he may deploy me as a slave.”

On this subject I myself have composed these lines:

I have observed that the greatest duty is that  
which is due to the teacher,  
and this is the most necessary thing for each Muslim to observe.  
It is a duty to offer him a thousand dirhams as a sign of honor  
for his instruction in one single letter of the alphabet.

He who teaches you one letter of what you need for your

religious instruction, he is your father in religion. Our teacher, the venerable Imām Sadīd al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, used to say: "Our elders stated that whoever wishes his son to become learned will have to cultivate traveling scholars,<sup>21</sup> esteem them, venerate them, as well as offer them remuneration." If one's son does not become learned, then one's grandson will."

In venerating the teacher, avoid walking in front of him and sitting in his place. And do not begin speaking in his presence without his permission, and do not speak to any great extent before him without his permission. One should not ask him any [question] when he is weary. One should observe the correct time and refrain from knocking on [his] door, but have patience until [the teacher] comes out. In short, one should seek his approval, avoid his resentment, and obey his commands in those things which are not sinful in the eyes of God, for [the Prophet ﷺ said], "Never should a created man be obeyed in rebellion against the Creator." The Prophet ﷺ also said, "Indeed, the most evil man is he who relinquishes his religion for the material world of other men. In this, he is sinning against God."

Revering the teacher includes respecting the teacher's children and those related to him. Imām Burhān al-Dīn, author of the *Hidāya*, narrated that one of the greatest *imāms* of Bukhāra used to sit when lecturing and at times rose in the middle of his discourse. When asked the reason [for rising] he explained, "The son of my teacher was playing with the boys on the street and sometimes came to the gate of the Mosque. As often as I saw him, I arose for him in order to honor my teacher."

The judge Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Arsābandī<sup>22</sup> was the chief Imām in Marw; the Sultan held him in the highest regard. Fakhr al-Dīn frequently said, "I have reached this rank only by serving my teacher, for I have served my teacher, Imām Abū Zayd al-Dabūsī.<sup>23</sup> I both waited on him and prepared his food for thirty years, but I

never ate anything thereof." Imām al-Hulwānī<sup>24</sup> left Bukhāra and settled for some time in a certain town because of an incident which befell him. His students visited him with the exception of Imām Abū Bakr al-Zaranjī.<sup>25</sup> When he met him, al-Hulwānī asked him, "Why did you not come to visit ~~me~~?" Abū Bakr replied, "I was occupied serving my mother." Al-Hulwānī answered, "You will obtain a livelihood but you will not attain the splendor of teaching." And this is just what happened, for [Abū Bakr] lived most of his life in villages and was unable to carry on lectures. Thus one is deprived of the fruits of learning when he slight[s] his teacher, and only in a small way does he profit from his knowledge:

Neither the teacher nor the physician advises you unless he is honored.

So bear your disease patiently if you have wronged its healer and be satisfied with your ignorance if you have wronged a teacher.

It is reported that Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd<sup>26</sup> sent his son to [the learned man] al-Asma'ī<sup>27</sup> to take up the study of [grammar] and *adab*. One day [the Caliph] saw [al-Asma'ī] purifying himself and washing his feet, while the son of the Caliph poured water over his feet. So [the Caliph] reprimanded al-Asma'ī in this manner saying, "I sent [my son] to you to learn grammar and be instructed in *adab*, so why is it that you don't ask him to pour water with one hand and wash your foot with the other hand?"

One way of holding knowledge in esteem is through veneration of the Book [the Quran]. It then behooves the student not to pick up the Book unless he is in a state of [ritual] purity. It has been told that Imām al-Hulwānī said: "I obtained [my] learning by means of veneration, for I never took up paper unless I was pure." Imām al-Sarakhsī<sup>28</sup> had abdominal issues and it was his wont to incessantly recite the Quran at night. So he purified himself seventeen times [out of bodily necessity] in order not to resume recitation without being pure. He did this since learning is light and purification is light; thus

the light of learning is increased by [purification].

The required veneration [of the Book] includes the obligation not to stretch out one's foot toward the Book; to place books of [Quran] interpretation above other books; and not to place anything else above the Book. Our teacher Imām Burhān al-Dīn often narrated that when a certain Shaykh [saw] a scholar putting an inkwell on the Book, he said to him in Persian "*bar na-yābī*," [that is, "You will reap no fruit" from your labors]. It was our teacher known as Qāḍīkhān<sup>29</sup> who used to say, "If one does not [break the rules for handling the Quran] or intend to treat the Book with disdain there is no harm in so doing, but it is better to guard oneself against [the possibility of such a breach of rules]."

The required veneration [for the Quran] includes the duty to write the Book beautifully and not in a cramped style, and not to leave notes in the margin except when it cannot be helped. When Abū Ḥanīfa saw someone writing the Book in a cramped style, he said, "Do not cramp your handwriting. If you live, you will regret it; and if you die, you will be taken to task." It is told that Imām Majd al-Dīn al-Sarakhsī<sup>30</sup> stated, "Let us not write in a cramped style lest we regret it; and let us not make selections [abridgments] lest we regret it; and let us not omit to collate [what we have written] lest we regret it."

Veneration of learning includes veneration of one's companions in the quest for knowledge and of one's fellow [students] during a lecture session. Adulation is blameworthy except in the quest of knowledge; for [at times, it becomes] necessary to praise one's teacher and one's fellow students in order that one can profit from their learning.

In seeking knowledge, it is essential to listen to [words of] knowledge and wisdom with reverence and veneration, even if one hears the same question and same words a thousand times. It is said that when one's respect [for knowledge] after [hearing it] a

thousand times is not equal to his respect the first time [he heard it], he is not worthy of knowledge.

In seeking knowledge, it is necessary that one not choose by himself the kind of learning to pursue, but to entrust the matter to the teacher. For indeed, the teacher has gained more experience in these matters, such that he is more knowledgeable of what is needed for each person and what is suitable to the nature [of each student]. Imām Burhān al-Dīn used to say, "In the quest for learning in early times, the students entrusted their affairs of learning to their teacher, and in this manner did they reach their goals and aims. But nowadays they make their own choices and fail to reach their objectives in religious and legal knowledge." It is related that Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī<sup>31</sup> came to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan with the *Book of Prayer* [probably a book on Sacred Law]. And Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan said to him, "Go out and learn the science of Tradition [Hadith]," for he assessed that this [field of] knowledge was better suited to his nature. So [Bukhārī] indeed studied the field of Prophetic Tradition and finally became superior to all the other principal scholars of Tradition.

It further behooves the student not to sit too close to the teacher during a lecture except when necessary. In fact, it is important that the pupils sit in a semi-circle at a certain distance from the teacher; this is more appropriate [in showing] due respect. And it is necessary in the quest of knowledge to be on one's guard from shameful traits of character, for they are the howling dogs of the spirit. The Messenger of God ﷺ has said, "The angels do not enter a home in which there is a dog or a picture."

It is said, "Knowledge is hostile to the haughty youth, just as torrential rain is hostile to the highlands." It is also said, "All glory is attained by exertion, not by luck. Is luck without exertion of any glory? How many a slave ranks with the free, and how many a freeborn ranks with the slave!"



## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Earnestness, Perseverance, and Assiduity*

Earnestness, perseverance, and assiduity are indispensable in the quest for knowledge. This is indicated in the Quran, in the very words of God, the Exalted, *Those who have earnestly striven in Our cause, We shall surely guide them to Our ways* (29:69); and “*O John [Yahyā], take the Book with power*” (19:12). It is said that he who seeks something and is industrious [in so doing] shall find it; and he who knocks at the door and is persistent shall enter. And it is said that you will reach what you desire [only] to the extent that you pursue it. It is said as well that the industriousness of three kinds of people is essential in [the pursuit of] knowledge and understanding: the student, the teacher, and the father, if he is among the living.

Imām Sadīd al-Dīn al-Shirāzī once recited to me a poem composed by al-Shāfi‘ī:

Earnest application makes accessible every remote affair,  
and industriousness opens every locked door.  
The creature of God most worthy of grief  
is a man of high aspirations who is worn out  
by a life of straightened circumstances.  
Proof of divine destiny and its wisdom  
are in the afflictions of the wise and the easy life of the fool.  
Lack of wealth will nourish intellectual power.  
They are opposites; how far apart are the two!

A poem by another author was recited to me:

Do you desire to become learned and skilled in debate  
by any means except labor? There are various kinds of stupidity.

No gain of riches is possible without difficulties  
which you must take upon yourself.

How, then, is it with learning?

Abū'l-Tayyib [al-Mutanabbi]<sup>32</sup> said, “I do not see a fault among the faults of men like the imperfection of those able to reach perfection.” It is essential in the seeking of knowledge to maintain a vigil throughout the nights, as the poet says:

Through much toil do you gain high distinction.  
So he who seeks learning keeps awake during the night.

You strive after glory but then you sleep at night?  
He who seeks pearls immerses himself in the sea.

The height of [the builder’s] blocks depends on the height  
of his aspirations; a man’s dignity rests on his nightly vigils.  
Whoever desires elevation without fatigue  
wastes his life in the quest for the absurd.

I have forsaken sleep at night to win Your satisfaction, O Lord of Lords.

So let me attain the acquisition of knowledge  
and let me reach the utmost degree of accomplishment.

It is said, “Take night as your camel; with it you shall attain your hope.” I myself made up a poem on this theme:

He who desires to carry out all his aspirations should use his nights  
as a camel on his road to reach them.

Diminish your food in order to maintain a vigil—  
if you wish, my friend, to attain perfection.

It is said, “He who keeps watch at night will rejoice in his heart during the day.” In the search for knowledge, it behooves one to persevere in study and repetition, both at the beginning of the night and at its end, for the time between dusk and the hour of dawn is a blessed time. On this subject, verses have been composed:

O seeker of knowledge, occupy yourself with reverence for God,

avoid sleep and leave off satisfying your hunger;  
And persevere in study—do not cease from it,  
for learning exists and grows through study.

[In the quest for learning], one must make use of the days of early youth and adolescence. It is said, “By the amount of work [you do], will you obtain what you strive for. So he who strives for a goal stays up by night. Make use of the days of early youth for verily the period of youth does not remain with you.” But [in order to pursue knowledge] one should not exhaust nor weaken oneself so that one cuts oneself off from work. On the contrary, one should practice temperance in this respect, for moderation is one great source of all success. The Messenger of God ﷺ said, “Indeed, this religion of mine is solidly grounded, so enter into it with moderation.” Do not make hateful to yourself the service of God. He who makes plants grow does not cut up the ground nor does he wholly neglect it. The Prophet ﷺ also said: “Your mind is your riding-beast, hence use it with moderation.” In seeking knowledge, it is important to aspire to the highest level of learning, since man flies by his aspirations as a bird flies with its wings.

Abū'l-Ṭayyib [al-Mutanabbi]<sup>33</sup> said:

Decisions are arrived at according to the stature of deciders,  
generous deeds according to the openhandedness of the generous.  
And small things are great in the eyes of the small person,  
and great things are small in the eyes of the great.

The chief aids in the acquisition of things are industriousness and high ambition. He who aspires to memorize all of the books of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, [for example], and adds [to this ambition] industriousness and perseverance, will surely retain the greater part of these books or at least a half. But if one has high aspirations but does not have industriousness, or has industriousness but lacks high aspirations, he will not attain except a small amount of knowledge.

Imām Raḍī al-Dīn al-Naysābūrī<sup>34</sup> recalled in the book *Makārim*

### *Earnestness, Perseverance, and Assiduity*

*al-Akhlāq* [Excellent Character] that when Dhū'l-Qarnayn<sup>35</sup> intended to make an expedition in order to become master of the East and the West, he consulted learned men and asked, “Why shall I make an expedition for such a portion of [my] empire? For the world is small and shall perish, and rule of the world is a contemptible thing. So this [expedition] is not a noble way to exert oneself.” But the learned men said, “Make the expedition in order that you may have possession of the present world and the Hereafter.” So he said, “This is good.” And the Messenger of God ﷺ said, “Surely, God, the Exalted, loves noble undertakings and abhors contemptible ones.”

It is said: “Do not make haste in your affairs but proceed slowly with them. For nothing will straighten your stick like a slow fire.”

It is reported that Abū Ḥanīfa said to Abū Yūsuf,<sup>36</sup> “You were unlearned, but assiduity in your studies made you emerge [from your ignorance]. But beware of laziness, for it is misfortune and a great calamity.” The venerable Imām Abū Naṣr al-Ṣaffār al-Anṣārī stated:

O my soul, my soul, do not become lax in your work of piety, justice, and good works [carried on] in calmness. For each one who does good deeds experiences happiness, while each one who acts in a lazy manner has afflictions and unhappiness.

There came to me a poem in the same vein:

Let go of laziness and slovenly ways, O my soul—  
otherwise you will bring on you contempt.  
For I do not see that the lazy have a share in anything,  
but regret and frustration of hopes.

And it is said:

How much shame, weakness, and regret  
is born to men from laziness.  
Beware of laziness in investigating the doubtful  
and the exceptional that come to your knowledge.

It is said that laziness issues from the paucity of meditation

on the virtues of knowledge and its merits. So it is necessary when embarking on study to bestir oneself for the acquisition [of knowledge] and [prod oneself] to industriousness and perseverance in the meditation of the merits of learning. For truly knowledge remains, while riches disappear, just as the Commander of Believers, 'Ali ibn Abī Tālib, said:

We are satisfied with the allotment decreed by [God]  
the All-Powerful.  
To us, [He gives] knowledge, and to the enemies, wealth.  
For wealth perishes, while knowledge lasts—never vanishes.

Good renown derives from useful knowledge and lasts after one's death. Indeed, this is life everlasting. Imām Ẓahīr al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, known as al-Marghīnānī,<sup>37</sup> recited to us:

The ignorant are dead before their death  
while the learned live even though they are dead.

The Shaykh al-Islām Burhān al-Dīn recited to us:

Ignorance is a death before death to those that harbor it;  
and their bodies are graves before the graves.  
A man who does not live by knowledge is dead.

*ignorant is  
dead*

Someone else said:

The master of knowledge lives on forever after his death,  
though his bones rot under the dust.  
But the ignorant is dead while he still walks on the earth.  
He is thought to be alive but he is non-existent.

Another poet said:

The life of the heart is knowledge, so seek it;  
and the death of the heart is ignorance, so shun it.

Imām Burhān al-Dīn recited for us:

Behold! learning occupies the highest rank, while inferior to it is the grandeur of the greatest in a princely procession.  
For the man of learning, his splendor continues to multiply, while the ignorant man just merely below the ground after his death.  
No one who ascends the ladder of empire and of generalship can

hope for the heights [of the learned].

I shall dictate to you some of the things of which [knowledge] consists. So listen! It is not possible for me to relate all the virtues of learning.

[Knowledge] is the most perfect light which guides people away from blindness, while the ignorant man passes his life in dark shades.

[Knowledge] is the summit of heights which protects one who seeks refuge in it; and by its auspices does one go along with security. Through [knowledge], one is taken into [divine] confidence, while [ordinary] men live in their heedless.

Through [knowledge], one has hope [for eternal life] even while the soul remains locked within the breast [while still alive].

Through [knowledge], man intercedes for the one who, out of rebellion [against God], descends to the very bottom of Hell, the most terrible of punishments.

So he who aspires to learn, aspires to all necessary things. And he who possesses it, possesses all those things that are worthy of quest. This is the honor of honors, O man of intelligence! So when you have won it, make light of the [worldly] honors.

For if the world seems to escape you, as well as its pleasures, then blink your eyes at them, for knowledge is the best of gifts.

[This] poem was recited to me by some other poet:

Since the learned man is held in honor through his knowledge,  
knowledge of the Law is the most worthy of honors.  
How much fragrance does it emit, unlike [fleeting] musk!  
And how high does it soar, unlike [the greedy] hawk!

A poet recited yet another poem to me:

Learning is the most precious thing you could store. He who takes up learning will never have his honor effaced.  
So acquire for yourself those matters of which you were once ignorant. For the beginning and the end of knowledge is happiness.

The joys of knowledge, learning, and insight are sufficient incentive for intelligent men to acquire knowledge. Laziness is often derived from a great deal of phlegm and bodily fluid; so the way to diminish [laziness] is by a reduction of food.

It is said that seventy prophets, peace be upon them, agreed that forgetfulness comes from an abundance of phlegm, while an abundance of phlegm comes from an abundance of drinking of water; and an abundance of drinking of water comes from an abundance of eating. Dry bread cuts out phlegm and so does the eating of dried figs with unseasoned bread, such that it eliminates the necessity for drinking water and thereby [decreasing] phlegm. Using the tooth-stick [*siwāk*] reduces phlegm, increases memory, and the aptitude for speaking well. It is also a practice prescribed by the *Sunna* [the tradition of the Prophet ﷺ], for it increases the efficacy of Prayer and the reading of the Quran. The way to reduce eating is to reflect on the advantages of eating in small amounts, namely, well being, chastity, and honor.

On this subject, it is said, "Disgrace—indeed disgrace and utter disgrace—is man's affliction on account of food."

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "Three kinds of people are beyond doubt hateful to God: the glutton, the miser, and the arrogant." Reflection [on diet] reveals the ill effects of excessive eating, for this is unhealthy and dulling to the character. It is said, "The [full] stomach destroys intelligence." Through [excessive eating] there is also loss of wealth; and eating beyond satiety is entirely harmful. By [excessiveness in eating] punishment is merited in the Hereafter, and the glutton is detestable to [righteous] souls. The correct way of reducing food is to eat oily dishes, as well as the most delicate and most desirable food. One should not eat with a voracious appetite. However, if one has an honest objective in eating much—like [eating a lot] to become stronger in order to fast, pray, and do difficult work—this is permissible.



## CHAPTER SIX

### *The Beginning of Study, Its Amount, and Its Organization*

OUR TEACHER, BURHĀN AL-DĪN, USED TO BEGIN HIS STUDIES ON Wednesday. He used to relate [the following tradition he heard] from his teacher, Qiwām al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Rashīd,<sup>38</sup> "I heard from a certain man, in whom I have confidence, that Imām Yūsuf al-Hamadānī<sup>39</sup> undertook all his best work on Wednesdays. [He did] this because Wednesday is the day in which light was created and it is a day injurious to the ways of the disbeliever, though it is a providential day for the believer."

On the subject of how much to study in the initial stages [of learning], Abū Ḥanifa quoted Imām ‘Umar (son of the Imām Abū Bakr al-Zaranjī), who said:

Our elders stated that it is necessary that the length of study for the beginner be an amount in which he can retain in his memory after two repetitions. Every day he should increase [the measure of] his recall by one word, so that even if the duration and quantity of his study become large, it would [still] remain possible for him to recall [his lessons by repeating them] twice. He would thus increase [his capacity] gently and gradually.

But if the length of study in the beginning is long such that it becomes necessary to make ten repetitions [of the material], then [the learner] may also proceed in this [methodical] fashion. [He can

do this] because he becomes accustomed to this [amount] and does not break this habit without great effort. It is said that learning is [worth] one letter, while repetition is [worth] a thousand letters.

It is necessary to begin [one's study] with matters that are more readily understood. Imām Sharaf al-Dīn al-'Uqayli<sup>40</sup> used to say, "In my opinion the right procedure [in study] is what our elders practiced. They chose to begin with a few subjects of broad content because these are more readily understood and retained; they are less fatiguing and occur frequently among men." It is [also] essential to write down an extract [of the material] after memorizing it and then repeat it often, for this [method] is indeed profitable. But the student should not write anything unless it is fully understood, for [writing down of undigested matter] blunts the character, ravages intelligence, and wastes time. It is important that the student exert himself strenuously to understand what he is offered by the teacher, applying intelligence, reflection, and much repetition. For if reading is limited but repetition and reflection are extensive, then [the student] will attain a firm grasp and understanding [of the material]. It is said that memorizing two letters is better than listening to two loads [of books]; moreover, comprehending two letters is better than memorizing two such loads. But if comprehension bypasses one and he does not exert oneself [to repeat the lesson at least] one or two times [to learn it], one [becomes vulnerable to] getting accustomed to this [negligence], such that even an easy lesson will not be comprehended. So it is necessary not to neglect gaining understanding [of one's subject matter] and to do one's work diligently, while praying to God the Exalted and beseeching Him humbly [for knowledge]. Indeed, God answers those who call upon Him and does not disappoint those who place hope in Him.

Imām Qiwām al-Dīn Ḥammād ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ismā'īl al-Ṣaffār al-Anṣārī recited a poem to us composed by al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad al-Sarakhsī,<sup>41</sup> who had it dictated to him:

Serve knowledge in a way useful [to you] and keep its lesson alive by praiseworthy action.

And if you do not retain anything, repeat it, then affirm it in a manner most energetic.

Then make notes about it that you may return to it and always study it.

Then when you are sure ~~it~~ will not slip from your grasp, go on to something new.

But at the same time repeat what had preceded; and establish firmly [in your mind] the import of this increase [in knowledge].

Discuss with people subjects of learning in order that you may live. Do not keep yourself away from the enlightened.

If you conceal knowledge, you will be forgotten so that you see no one but the ignorant and the boorish.

Then you will be bridled with a fire on the Day of Resurrection and will be made to burn with a vehement chastisement.

It is necessary to pursue knowledge by means of discussion, debate, and inquiry. It is [also] essential that [one do these things] with fairness, circumspection, and deliberation. One must fortify himself against altercation and anger. [It is true that] discussion and argument are [a kind of] consultation; and consultation aims at establishing the truth. This, however, is attained only through circumspection, the avoidance of violent dispute, and fairness—not through hostility and anger. For [argument and discussion] aimed at forcing [one's views upon another] and crushing an opponent are illicit. They are permissible only when they seek to bring out the truth. Ruse and tricks are not admissible [in discussion] except when the opponent himself is quibbling and is not really seeking the truth.

Muhammad ibn Yaḥyā used to say when encountering a problematic question [in a debate] and an answer does not readily present itself to him, "What you have compelled me to admit [appears] to be necessarily [true], and I shall examine it further: *And above all who have knowledge is [God] the All-Knowing (QURAN, 12:76).*" The usefulness of posing and discussing questions is greater

than the usefulness of mere repetition, since in [discussing questions] there is repetition and an additional element. It is said that posing questions for an hour is better than a month of repetition; but this holds good only when the discussion is carried on with someone who has a just and candid nature. Beware of an argument with an adversary who is a quibbler of a perverse nature, for [undesirable] character creeps into [one] stealthily; habits are contagious and proximity [to those of lowly character] leaves its traces.

It is further said that knowledge has this condition [of being contagious] for the one who serves it, such that it should make all men the servants of knowledge.

It is incumbent upon the student that he ponder long and often on the more subtle matters of knowledge and that he accustom himself to this; for only by reflection can subtle problems be solved. For this reason it is said, “Reflect and you will reach a solution.” But it is essential to reflect before speaking in order [to say] what is correct. Speech is like an arrow; it is necessary to aim it by way of reflection before uttering anything. This way one hits the target. Regarding the principles of jurisprudence [*uṣūl al-fiqh*], it is a major axiom that the discourse of a jurist in debate be based on thorough reflection. It is said, moreover, that the first principle of intelligence is practicing discourse with consideration and circumspection. Somebody said, “I recommend to you five things when composing your discourse—that is, if you are obedient to a well-meaning advisor. Do not neglect the purpose of the discourse, its time, its quality, its quantity, and its place.”

Under all circumstances and times [the student] should endeavor to profit from everybody present. The Messenger of God ﷺ said, “Wisdom is a wandering beast of the believer. Wherever he finds it, he should seize it.” It is said, “Seize whatever is clear and discard whatever is turbid.” I heard Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Kāsānī<sup>42</sup> say that Abū Yūsuf had a servant who [for a time] was given in guardianship

to Muḥammad [ibn al-Hasan], who said to her, “Do you remember anything learned that Abū Yūsuf said?” She said: “Nothing except that he used to repeat frequently: ‘A share in tribal holdings is not transmissible by will.’” So Muḥammad remembered this from her. It so happened that this question had long perplexed Muḥammad, but his doubt was removed by the statement. He then realized that knowledge could be attained from everyone. It is for this reason that Abū Yūsuf, when he was asked, “How do you attain your knowledge?” he said, “I never scorn to profit [by anyone] nor am I stingy in profiting [others].”

It was said to Ibn ‘Abbās,<sup>43</sup> “In what way did you pursue knowledge?” He answered, “With the aid of a tongue fond of asking and a heart full of good sense.” Students of knowledge are called “What-do-you-sayers,” simply because in their early days they often ask “What do you say concerning this question?” Abū Hanifa used to study by posing questions often and discussing them in his shop when he was a cloth merchant. Through this example does one recognize that the acquisition of knowledge and learning can be linked to the earning of a livelihood. Abū Ḥafṣ al-Kabīr<sup>44</sup> used to work for a living and at the same time repeat assiduously [his studies].

If a seeker of knowledge must make a living to support his family and other [dependents], then he should work for his livelihood and [at the same time] repeat and discuss [his lessons]. [This he should do] instead of being lazy. One who is of sound mind and body, there is no excuse [in poverty] to neglect study and learning, for no one was poorer than Abū Yūsuf, and this did not prevent him from learning. But what of the person who possesses much wealth? “Let wealth that is righteously attained benefit the righteous man”<sup>45</sup> who plods on in the path of learning. It was said to a learned man, “How did you acquire knowledge?” He said: “Through a rich father. By means of his [wealth] he supported learned and good men. This was

the reason that my knowledge increased."

Gratitude for the blessing of intelligence and knowledge also increases one's knowledge. Abū Ḥanīfa said, "I acquired knowledge by praising God and thanking Him. As often as I understood an item of learning and gained grasp of a point of law or a nugget of wisdom, I said, 'Praise be to God!' Thus, my knowledge was increased." As such, it is necessary in the quest for learning to occupy oneself with giving thanks by way of the tongue, the heart, the hands, and one's wealth.

[It is important] to realize that understanding, knowledge, and good fortune come from God the Exalted, as well as from asking God for guidance by supplicating him and beseeching Him. For [God] the Exalted is the One who guides those who seek His guidance.

So the followers of truth—who are the followers of the Prophet's way  and the community of believers<sup>46</sup>—seek the truth from God the Exalted who Himself is the Truth, the Elucidator, the Guide, and the Protector [against error]. So God the Exalted leads [followers of the truth] and protects them from error. However, people of misguidance admire their own intelligence and their opinions. They seek the truth [only] from mortals who are weak and rely only on reasoning [without revelation from God].<sup>47</sup> For human reasoning does not encompass everything in all respects, just as vision does not reveal all things to the sight. These people are veiled from and incapable [of the highest truth]. Consequently, they go astray and cause others to stray [with them].

It is said, "He who knows himself knows his Lord." For when one realizes his own limitations, he knows more of the power of God, and he [learns] not to rely on himself and his own intellect. Instead, he places his trust in God and seeks the truth from Him. And those who rely on God, He suffices them and will guide them along the straight way.

### *The Beginning of Study, Its Amount, and Its Organization*

He who possesses wealth should not be miserly. In fact, it is necessary to seek refuge in God from miserliness. The Prophet  said: "What affliction is worse than miserliness?" The father of Imām al-Hulwānī was poor and sold sweets. He used to give sweets to scholars of law and ~~then~~ say [to them]: "Pray for my son." By virtue of his generosity, trust, and supplication, his son attained [eminence as a scholar].

With wealth one can buy books, as well as concern oneself with having books written, for this aids in [attaining] knowledge and learning. Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan had so much wealth that he had 300 caretakers to look after his assets. But then he spent all of his wealth toward the pursuit of knowledge and learning. [In fact], he did not retain a single valuable garment. So when Abū Yūsuf saw him [dressed] in shabby clothing, he sent him some splendid clothes. But [Muhammad ibn al-Hasan] did not accept them, saying: "[Good things] come to you in advance; but for us, they are deferred [until the Hereafter]." Although the acceptance of a gift is in accordance with the Prophet's tradition , [Muhammad ibn al-Hasan] did not accept these [clothes] perhaps because he saw it as an abasement of himself. The Prophet  said, "Believers are not allowed to debase themselves."

It is reported that the scholar Fakhr al-Islām al-Arsābandī collected the rinds of melons that were discarded in a desolate place. He then washed them and ate them. A woman bondservant saw him and told her master about it. He then had her prepare a supper for [al-Arsābandī] and invited him to dine, but Arsābandī did not accept because [he felt it would abase him].

So it is essential in the quest for knowledge that one pursue the highest aspiration without coveting the wealth of people. The Prophet  said, "Beware of being covetous, for it is ever-present poverty." Also, one should never be miserly with whatever wealth he has; instead let one spend it on himself or on others." It is said,

“People are in poverty because they fear poverty.”

Long ago, people used to learn handicrafts and [simultaneously] pursue knowledge, so that they would not covet the wealth of other people. In the [Book of] Wisdom<sup>48</sup> it is said, “He who seeks to grow rich from the wealth of men becomes poor.” A scholar who becomes covetous no longer preserves the integrity of knowledge and no longer speaks the truth. And for this reason did [the Prophet ﷺ], “The deliverer of sacred Law seeks refuge in God from [covetousness], saying, ‘I take refuge in God from covetousness which leads to disgrace.’”

It is essential for believers not to hope [for anything] unless it comes from God and not to fear anything except from God Himself. [In ignoring this], one violates the ordinances of the Law, since he who sins against God out of fear of human beings actually fears someone other than God. But if one does not sin against God out of fear of his fellow men, and thus observes the ordinances of sacred Law, then he fears no one other than God. The same principle applies to hope.

It is necessary in seeking knowledge that one enumerate and measure for oneself the amount of repetition [required to learn a lesson], for one’s mind is not at ease until it attains this [appropriate] amount. It is further necessary to repeat yesterday’s lesson five times; the lesson of the preceding day four times; the lesson of the prior day three times; the one prior to that two times, and that of the day before one time. This ensures that [the lesson is] kept in memory. And it is essential not to become accustomed to repeating [things] silently, since it is necessary that learning and repetition be carried on with vigor and enthusiasm, lest one break the habit of repetition. It is not necessary to speak in a loud voice when talking to oneself, for this too impedes repetition. [It is said], “The best of ways is the middle course.” It is reported that Abū Yūsuf vigorously and enthusiastically discussed matters of jurisprudence with learned

men. And his son-in-law accompanied him and marveled at his performance. He said, “I know that he has been hungry for five days; and still, he discusses with vigor and enthusiasm.”

It is essential that there be no [abrupt] intermission in the pursuit of learning, for this is indeed harmful. It was our teacher, Imām Burhān al-Dīn, who said, “I became superior to my companions because I took no intermission in my pursuits.”

It was reported by Imām Shaykh al-Islām ‘Alī al-Asbjābī<sup>49</sup> that there occurred during the time of his studies a break [in his formal schooling] during a period of twelve years because of the overthrow of the government. So he left the country with his companion he used to debate with, and did not cease his discussions. The two of them used to sit [together] for discussion each day and did not neglect this during this twelve-year period. Later his companion became the venerable Shaykh al-Islām for the Shāfi‘ites.

Imām Fakhr al-Islām Qādīkhān said, “It is important in studying sacred Law to memorize one particular book of law constantly, so that afterwards it will be easy for one to retain whatever legal information one hears.”



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Relying on God

IT IS NECESSARY IN THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE THAT ONE RELY entirely on God and not be worried about matters [like] material sustenance; one should not occupy one's mind with [such concerns]. Abū Ḥanīfa related what he heard from 'Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥasan al-Zabīdī,<sup>50</sup> "A person who devotes himself to learning God's religion, God Almighty gives him sufficient care and provides for him in unexpected ways." So he who occupies himself with matters of sustenance, such as food and clothing, is not yet free enough for the acquisition of noble traits and elevated matters, [like knowledge and scholarship].

It is said [derisively], "Renounce noble matters and do not journey to seek them. Remain instead where you are, for you are zealous for food and clothing."

A man said to Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj,<sup>51</sup> "Give me sound advice." He said, "[My advice] concerns your own soul. If you do not keep it occupied, it will keep you occupied." It is necessary, therefore, for everyone to occupy himself with good deeds so that the soul does not concern itself with [mundane] desires. The intelligent man should not be eager for the affairs of this world, since this kind of anxiety and grief does not avert calamity and is really of no use. It is harmful, in fact, to the spirit, the mind, and the body. [Working for

the world] causes a cessation of good deeds. So one should attend to matters pertaining to the Hereafter, since these [matters] prove beneficial. As for [the Prophet's] saying ﷺ, "There are sins whose only atonement is through concerning [oneself] with earthly life," this means only a measure of concern [for the affairs of this world] such that it does not interfere with doing good deeds or occupy [one's] presence of mind during Prayer. For indeed this [minimum] amount of concern and effort [for this world] actually pertains to the deeds related to the Hereafter.

It is essential in the search for knowledge to reduce one's attachment to worldly affairs as much as one can. Therefore, [students] elect to go abroad [in order to acquire knowledge]. One should bear patiently with the labors and hardships in the journey of learning, just as Moses ﷺ said during [his] journey for knowledge, "Indeed, we have found fatigue in this journey of ours" (QURAN, 18: 61). These words did not issue from him concerning any other kind of journey [other than that for learning]. This shows that the journey for knowledge is not without difficulty and that knowledge is a very serious affair. According to most learned men, [seeking knowledge] is more excellent than battling enemies. [Divine] recompense is determined by the amount of toil and labor [one exerts]. So he who perseveres in this [toil and labor] will encounter such delight in gaining knowledge that it overcomes all other delights of this world. On this matter, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan used to say when he spent nights awake and solving difficult problems, "How far removed are the sons of kings from these [unspeakable] delights!"

It is obligatory for the student not to be occupied with anything else but knowledge and never turn away from learning. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan said, "Indeed, this trade of [scholarship] goes on from cradle to grave; so he who wishes to refrain from this pursuit of knowledge for even one hour, might as well leave it entirely this very hour."

The learned jurist [Ibrāhīm ibn al-Jarrāḥ]<sup>52</sup> came to Abū Yūsuf to visit him during his mortal illness, when [Abū Yūsuf] was very close to his death. Abū Yūsuf asked him, “Is the throwing of stones [during Hajj] on horseback superior to the throwing of stones on foot?”<sup>53</sup> When [Ibrāhīm ibn al-Jarrāḥ] did not know the answer, Abū Yūsuf provided the answer himself—namely, the early authorities preferred the throwing of stones on foot.

This illustrates that the scholar is one who concerns himself with study at all times. In this way does one partake in the great delight found in this [pursuit]. And it was said that after his death, Muḥammad [ibn al-Hasan] appeared to someone in a dream and was asked, “What were you doing when you were about to pass away?” He answered, “I was reflecting on a certain [legal] question concerning a bondservant buying his freedom. I didn't even notice the departure of my soul [from my body].” At the very end of his life, Muḥammad [ibn al-Hasan] said [out of utter humility], “The question of a bondservant buying his own freedom has occupied me from preparing for this day.”



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *The Time for the Acquisition of Knowledge*

THE TIME FOR LEARNING EXTENDS FROM CRADLE TO GRAVE. HASAN ibn Ziyād,<sup>54</sup> who reached the age of eighty years, had taken up the study of theology, and over a period of forty years, he never spent the night stretched out on a mattress. Then for the next forty years he gave legal opinions.

The best period [in life for study] is at the beginning of adolescence. [The best period of the day] is the time of dawn and that between the setting of the sun and the first Prayer vigil of the night. It is necessary to fully immerse oneself in the study of knowledge at all times. But if one becomes over-fatigued by a given discipline, then he should move on to another. Whenever he became tired of speaking, Ibn ‘Abbās used to say, “Hand me the collections of the poets.” Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan did not sleep a night without placing before him various texts; when he got fatigued with one of them, he looked into another. And he drove away sleep with [cold] water, for he used to say, “Sleep is induced by heat.”



## CHAPTER NINE

### Helpfulness and Good Advice

A PERSON OF KNOWLEDGE MUST BE SYMPATHETIC AND HELPFUL rather than jealous, for envy is injurious and devoid of benefit. Shaykh al-Islām Burhān al-Dīn used to say, “The son of the learned man will be learned himself because the man of knowledge earnestly desires that his disciples become scholars. So through the blessing that comes from his conviction and compassion, his son too will become learned.” And it is reported that Burhān al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Umar ibn Māza<sup>55</sup> fixed the time for study with his sons, al-Ṣadr al-Shahīd Ḥusām al-Dīn<sup>56</sup> and al-Ṣadr al-Sa‘īd Tāj al-Dīn,<sup>57</sup> at the height of late morning after [the completion] of all his [other] lessons. But [the sons] said: “Our natural faculties are tired and worn out at that time.” So their father replied, “Foreigners and the sons of the great have come to me from various regions of the earth. I must tend to their instruction first.” Through the blessing of his benevolence, his sons became scholars superior to most of the learned of their day.

It is necessary not to enter into a litigation with anyone nor have an altercation with him, for this is time consuming. It is said that whoever does good to others is rewarded because of his beneficence, while he who does evil, his evil deeds suffice him [as a punishment].

Imām Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, known as Imām Khawāhir Zāda al-Muftī,<sup>58</sup> told me, “The Master of Sacred Law, Yūsuf al-Hamadānī, recited this verse to me, ‘Do not punish a man for his misdeeds / his character and deeds are sufficient [punishment] for him.’”

It is also said that he who wishes to humiliate his enemy by showing his superiority to him let him repeat these verses.

If you wish to see your enemy upon the ground and to slay him with grief and inflame him with worry,

Then strive for the noblest [of gains] and increase your knowledge more and more. Indeed, he who adds to his knowledge increases the sorrow of the man who envies him.

But you must apply yourself toward things that are beneficial to your soul, not toward the conquering of your enemy. For if you concern yourself with things that benefit your soul, this guarantees conquest over your enemy. But beware of hostile action, for this will cover you with shame and waste your time. Furthermore, you must bear injustice patiently, especially if it comes from the fools. Jesus, son of Mary, ﷺ said, “Bear once with a fool so you may gain tenfold [reward from God].” A poem of unknown authorship was recited to me:

I put men to the test one generation after another,  
and I did not see anything but trickery and prattle.  
Nor did I find any trial more hurtful  
and harder to bear than the mutual hostility of men.  
And I tasted the bitterness of things everywhere,  
and there was nothing more bitter than begging.

Beware not to think ill of a believer, for this produces hostility. This is not at all permissible according to the statement of [the Prophet] ﷺ, “Think well of believers.” Indeed, [evil thinking] springs from malignity of intent and wickedness of the character. It is just as Abū'l-Ṭayyib [al-Mutanabbi] said:<sup>59</sup>

If the deeds of a man are evil, then his thoughts are evil and he

believes whatever suspicion haunts him.  
He makes enemies of his friends on the basis of what their enemies  
say; and he plunges into a dark night of doubt.

Another poem of unknown authorship was recited to me:

Draw away from the vile person and do not seek him out;  
but to he whom you have dispensed good, increase this.  
You may protect yourself against every guile of your enemy;  
but when the enemy plots, do not plot against him.

A poem by the Shaykh al-‘Amīd Abū'l-Faṭḥ al-Bustī<sup>60</sup> was recited  
to me:

The intelligent man is not safe from an ignorant fool  
who besets him with tribulation and annoyance.  
Let [the wise] choose calm over belligerence  
and remain silent when one shouts.



## CHAPTER TEN

### *Useful Means for the Attainment of Knowledge*

A PERSON IN PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE SHOULD SEEK IT AT ALL times, so that he may eventually attain excellence. One way to attain knowledge is to have ink available to [the seeker] at every occasion so that he can jot down whatever knowledge he hears. It is said that he who simply tries to memorize [what he has heard, the lesson will] flee; but he who writes it down stands firm. It is [also] said that knowledge is that which is taken from the lips of men, since they recall only the best of what they heard and mention only the best of what they recall.

Al-Ṣadr al-Shahīd Ḥusām al-Dīn made the recommendation to his son Shams al-Dīn that he commit to memory a moderate amount of knowledge and wisdom every day, such that it will grow and become significant in a short period of time.

Īṣām ibn Yūsuf<sup>61</sup> purchased for himself a reed-pen for one *dinār* in order to immediately write down whatever matter he heard, for life is short and knowledge extensive. It is necessary not to waste time or hours but make use of nights as well as periods of retirement.

Yahyā ibn Mu‘ādh al-Rāzī<sup>62</sup> is reported to have said, “The night is long, so do not shorten it by sleeping; and the day is brilliant, so do not obscure it with your sins.”

It is necessary to benefit from learned men and acquire information from them, for it's not possible to attain what escapes, just as our teacher Shaykh al-Islām said with respect to his venerable colleagues and teachers, “How many learned men have I come across without consulting them sufficiently.” And I state that this kind of missed opportunity is the fount of the verse, “Alas for a meeting missed, alas! / Nothing that has passed by and vanished can be obtained [again].”

‘Alī [ibn Abī Ṭālib] said, “If you are occupied with [learning] something, then concentrate on it wholeheartedly. To withdraw from [the study of] the knowledge of God is shameful and a big loss; so seek refuge in God from this [distraction] both night and day.”

It is essential for the student of knowledge to bear patiently with miseries and humiliation while seeking learning. Flattery is blameworthy except in the quest of knowledge. In order to attain information, flattery of the scholar and one's associates cannot be helped.

It is said that knowledge is nobility without debasement. But no one reaches it except through debasement, in which there is no nobility. Someone [else] has said, “I see that you desire to ennable your soul; but you will not attain nobility before you have humbled [your soul].”



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *Abstinence During the Pursuit of Learning*

A CERTAIN AUTHOR RELATED A TRADITION UNDER THE HEADING [of this chapter], “He who does not exert abstinence while learning, God the Almighty chastises [him] in one of three ways: either he deprives him of life in his youth or exiles him into [far-off] regions, or punishes him [by forcing him to enter] the service of the Sultan.”

The more abstinent a seeker of knowledge is, the more useful his knowledge becomes. Moreover, his learning becomes easier and the acquisition of beneficial matters more expansive. In part, abstinence is to guard against satiety [from hunger], much sleep, and abundant talk about useless matters. One must also beware of eating food in the marketplace if possible, because food of the market is more apt to be impure and contaminated. Eating in the market is further removed from the contemplation of God and closer to being heedless of Him. Moreover, the eyes of the needy fall upon the food [in the marketplace]; while the needy are unable to purchase anything. As a result, they are further harmed, and the blessing of the food vanishes.

It is related by Imām al-Jalīl Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl<sup>63</sup> that when he was in the process of gaining knowledge, he did not eat food of the marketplace. Once before, however, his father prepared a

meal for him and brought it to him on Friday. When he saw bread from the marketplace in [his son's] home, he refused to address him because of his displeasure with him. His son then gave the excuse, "I myself did not bring it nor did I get satisfaction out of it. It was a friend of mine who brought it." His father replied, "Had you been on guard and self-restraining in matters like this, your friend would not have ventured to do this."

In this way were [serious students] abstinent. As a result, they were successful in attaining knowledge and in spreading [their learning] far and wide, such that their names shall last [in public renown] until the Day of Resurrection.

A certain educated man among the learned ascetics admonished a student saying, "You must be on guard against slander and keeping company with the loquacious." He further said, "He who talks much robs you of your life and wastes your time." In being abstinent, [therefore], one must avoid [associating with] corrupt and sinful people and those negligent [of their religious duties]. One must [instead] choose to associate with the righteous; for without doubt, proximity leaves its traces.

[Furthermore], one should sit facing Makkah and be an adherent of the exemplary way of the Prophet ﷺ. One should also enlist the supplication of good people while avoiding that of the trespassers.

It is reported that two men went abroad in quest for knowledge and were companions in learning. After some years, they returned to their native land. One of them had become a legist, while the other had not. The jurists of the land pondered [this matter] and investigated their situations, their method of retaining their lessons, and how they sat when studying. They were informed that the one who mastered sacred Law had sat in certain a way, while he often repeated what he had learned; he also faced the *qibla* [in the direction of Makkah] and the city in which he had gathered his knowledge. However, the other man had turned his back to the

*qibla* and [turned] his face away from this city. So these theologians and legists agreed that a jurist masters the study of law [in part] through the blessing of turning in the direction of the *qibla*, since this is the traditional way of sitting except under compulsion to do otherwise. [Students also learn] through the blessing of Muslims making supplication for them. For the city of [a successful student's] studies is not devoid of pious men and good people, and it is clear that a pious man prays for him at night.

It is necessary in the quest for learning not to neglect [both] the etiquette *[ādāb]* and the practice of the Prophet ﷺ, for whoever is negligent of the etiquette is likewise deprived of the practice of the Prophet ﷺ; and he who neglects the practice of the Prophet ﷺ is deprived of the fulfillment of his legal obligations. Moreover, he who is deprived of the fulfillment of his legal obligations is denied [goodness] in the Hereafter.

It is essential that one engage much in Prayer [*Salāt*] and that the Prayers be performed with humility, for this indeed helps in study and the acquisition of knowledge. A poem was recited to me by the illustrious shaykh Najm al-Dīn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Nasafī:<sup>64</sup>

Be observant of commands and prohibitions  
and be assiduous and observant of the Prayer.  
Seek knowledge of the divine law  
and be diligent and procure help through good deeds;  
then you will become a legist, a guardian of the law.  
Ask God that He preserve your memory, hoping  
for its excellence, for God is supreme in remembering.

He further said:

Be obedient and work diligently and do not become lazy.  
Thus will you return to your Lord.  
And do not sleep at night, for the best of people,  
*Only little of the night do they lay down.*

It is important that one carry with him a book under any circumstance in order to read it. It is said that he who does not have

a book in his sleeve, wisdom shall not be firmly established in his heart. It is likewise essential that in the book there be blank pages and that one carry ink in order to write down what one hears.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *Memory and Forgetfulness*

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN [STRENGTHENING] MEMORY are industriousness and commitment. Reducing one's consumption, [increasing] Prayer at night, and reading the Quran are also factors for [improving] one's memory. It is said that nothing increases memory retention more than reading the Quran silently; and reading the Quran silently is most excellent, for [the Prophet ﷺ] said, "The most excellent among the works of my community is reading the Quran silently."

Al-Shaddād ibn Ḥakīm<sup>65</sup> saw one of his deceased brothers in his dream and said to him, "What thing did you find the most useful [for your Afterlife]?" He replied, "Reading the Quran silently."

One should say when lifting the Quran, "In the name of God, and glory be to God, and praise be to God, and there is no God but God, and God is the greatest, and there is no power or strength except in God, the Exalted, the Mighty, who knows the number of all the letters that ever were [written] and that ever shall be written throughout the centuries and ages."

And let it be said after each prescribed [Prayer], "I believe in God, the One, the Unique, the Truth, who has no companion; and I do not believe in any [deity] besides Him." [One] should also pray

much [that God send] blessings and peace upon the Prophet ﷺ, for he is a *mercy to the worlds* (QURAN, 21:107).

It is said in a poem:

I complained to Waki<sup>66</sup> of my bad memory.  
So he directed me to cease from evil doing;  
For indeed memory is a favor from God  
and a favor of God is not given to he who sins.

Using the tooth-stick [*siwāk*], drinking honey, eating the incense plant<sup>67</sup> with sugar, and eating 21 red raisins a day on an empty stomach generates good memory, since [these things] cure many sicknesses and illnesses. For everything that diminishes phlegm and bodily fluid increases memory, and everything that augments phlegm induces forgetfulness.

Moreover, among those things that bring about forgetfulness are wrongdoing, committing many sins, harboring worries and anxiety over worldly matters, and being distracted by many occupations and attachments. We have mentioned previously that it is not befitting for an intelligent man to overly concern himself with worldly matters since they are harmful and are of no real benefit. Worldly anxieties create darkness in the heart, but concern for the Hereafter brings light into the heart. [This light] becomes apparent through Prayer. Anxiety for worldly affairs impedes one from doing good, while concern for the Hereafter incites one to do good, as does occupying oneself with Prayer in a spirit of humility and presence of mind.

The acquisition of learning drives out concern and sorrow, just as Imām Naṣr ibn al-Hasan al-Marghīnānī<sup>68</sup> said in one of his poems:

Find your wealth, O Naṣr ibn al-Hasan,  
in all [branches of] learning which can be amassed.  
These will keep sorrow away.  
Nothing else can be relied on [to do so].

Imām Najm al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Nasafī said in one of his poems:

Farewell greetings to her who enslaved me through her elegance, the splendor of her cheeks, and the furtive glances of her eyes. A charming young maiden captivated me and filled me with love. Imagination is confounded in describing her [charms]. But I said [to her]: “Leave me and excuse me, for indeed I have become enamored with knowledge and its unveiling. And for me seeking ~~knowledge~~<sup>69</sup>, learning, and reverence of God suffices me over the song of singing maidens and their perfume.”



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

*One's Livelihood and One's Life*

THE STUDENT OF LEARNING MUST HAVE SUSTENANCE AND HAVE knowledge of those things which increase it. [The student should know as well] what augments life and health in order to be free from [other] occupations and thus [devote himself] to the pursuit of knowledge alone. Books have been written describing these matters; so briefly I will cite only some [points concerning this].

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, “The decrees of God are not averted except by supplication, and your span of life is not augmented except through piety. For a man is deprived of sustenance because of a sin he has committed.” This statement establishes for certain that the perpetration of sin is the cause of sustenance deprivation, especially in the case of telling lies which brings about poverty. There is a specific hadith that establishes this [effect of lying]. Sleep in the morning cuts off sustenance. In fact, an overabundance of sleep brings about poverty and a dearth of learning as well.

Somebody said, “The joy of man lies in putting on [fine] clothes; [whereas] garnering knowledge is [achieved] through leaving off sleeping.” Someone else said, “Is it not a great loss that nights pass without use and yet they are considered part of my life?”

Another yet said, “You there, get up this night! Perhaps you will be well-guided! How long will you sleep through your night while

your life is consumed?”

To sleep naked and urinate naked; to eat in a state of impurity and to eat lying down on one's side on a couch; to neglect the food remnants on the table; to burn up the skins of onion and garlic; to sweep the house in the night and leave the sweepings in the house; to go ahead of venerable old people [or learned men]; call one's parents by their given names; the using of toothpicks made of every kind of wood [while only bitter wood should be used]; washing the hand with mud and earth; sitting on the doorstep; lying on one's side against one of the door posts; making sacred ablutions in the latrine; sewing clothes on one's body; drying one's face with clothes; leaving spider webs in the house; neglecting Prayers; making a hasty exit from the mosque after the Morning Prayers; going to the market very early and being late in returning from it; buying pieces of bread from poor people; begging; invoking evil on one's children; to leave off covering vessels; and extinguishing the lantern by blowing at it [with one's breath]—all of this can bring about poverty. This is known through traditions going back to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Likewise to write with a knotted reed-pen;<sup>69</sup> to comb oneself with a broken comb; being negligent in supplicating for one's parents; to be seated while winding one's turban around the head; to put on one's trousers standing up; having avarice, miserliness, or extravagance; having laziness, sluggishness, and neglect in one's affairs—all lead to poverty.

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, “Giving charity brings about [from God] your sustenance.” Early rising is blessed since it increases all kinds of good things, especially sustenance. Beauty in handwriting is among the keys to securing sustenance. Also a merry expression of the face and wholesome speech increase sustenance.

According to al-Hasan ibn 'Alī [ibn Abī Tālib],<sup>70</sup> sweeping the courtyard and washing cooking vessels lead to riches. Yet the most influential factor in bringing about sustenance is the performance of

Prayer with reverence, humility, modesty, and proper positioning of the body—as are the rest of the obligatory aspects, traditional rites, and accepted practices pertaining to [Prayer].

The Midmorning Prayer [*Duhā*] is a very well known act [associated with provision]; as are reading *Sūrat al-Wāqi'a*,<sup>71</sup> particularly at night when [one usually] sleeps, and reading *Sūrat al-Mulk*,<sup>72</sup> *Sūrat al-Muzzammil*,<sup>73</sup> *Sūrat al-Layl*,<sup>74</sup> and *Sūrat al-Sharh*.<sup>75</sup>

[It is also helpful] to be present in the Mosque before the Call to Prayer [*Adhān*], have constancy in purification, and perform at home the supererogatory [non-obligatory] Prayer that precedes the Dawn Prayer, as well as the *Witr* Prayer [at night]. [Furthermore], one should not speak of mundane matters after the *Witr* Prayer. Nor should one frequently sit in the company of women unless it is necessary. One should not engage in vain discourse that is of no benefit to one's religious or worldly affairs.

It is said that whoever occupies himself with insignificant things, then important things will bypass him. Buzurjmihr<sup>76</sup> said, "When you see a man who speaks too much, be persuaded that he is insane." And 'Alī [ibn Abī Ṭālib] said, "When intelligence is complete, then speech becomes rare."

On this subject the following verse occurred to me:

When a person's intelligence is complete, his speech becomes rare.  
Be sure of the stupidity of a man if he speaks too much.

Somebody else said:

Speech is a necessary evil, but silence is salvation.  
So when you have to talk, do not be prolific.  
You will never once repent of your silence,  
but oftentimes you will repent of your speech.

Also one's sustenance is increased if he [or she] does the following:

Recite each day from the moment of daybreak to the time of Dawn

Prayer starts a hundred times: "Glory be to God, the Exalted. Glory be to God and all praise. I seek forgiveness from God and turn to him penitently."

Say everyday in the morning and evening one hundred times: "There is no God but God, the King, the Truth, the Elucidator."

Say after Dawn and Dusk Prayers each day thirty-three times: "Praise be to God, and glory be to God, and there is no God but God, and God is the greatest!"

Seek forgiveness from God, the Exalted, forty [or seventy] times after the Dawn Prayer and one should frequently repeat the words: "There is no strength nor power except in God the Most High, the Greatest; and blessings and peace be on the Prophet."

Say every Friday seventy times: "O God! make me content with those things You have made permissible as opposed to those things You have made prohibited. And make me satisfied with Your favor to the exclusion of anybody else's."

Say the following in praise of [God] every day and night: "You are God, the Most Glorious and the Wise; You are God, the King, the Holy; You are God, the Forbearing, the Generous; You are God, the Creator of all; You are God, the Creator of Paradise and Hellfire; You are the Knower of the unseen and seen, Knower of all secrets and hidden matters; You are the Greatest, the Most Exalted; You are God, the Creator of everything and to You do all things revert; You are God, the Judge on the Day of Judgment; never did You cease nor will you ever cease. You are God, there is no God but You; You are God, the Unique, the Eternal; *He begets not, nor is He begotten. And there is none who compares with Him.* You are God, there is no God but You, the Merciful, the Mercy-Giving. You are God, there is no God but You, the King, the Holy, the Peace, the Trustworthy, the Guardian, the Powerful, the Omnipotent, the Sublime. There is no God but You, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner, to whom belong the most beautiful names. Everything in the heavens and the earth gives glory to Him. And He is the Mighty, the Wise."

Increase in the span of life is further owed to piety and to leaving off what brings about harm. One should also venerate the elders

and stand by one's kin. One should say at the time of dawn and at dusk every day three times: "Glory be to God who fills the scales of judgment, the ultimate limit of knowledge, the highest measure of satisfaction, and the weighty occupant of the Throne." And: "There is no God but Him, who fills the scales of judgment, the ultimate limit of knowledge, the highest measure of satisfaction, and the weighty occupant of the Throne." And: "God is greatest who fills the scales of judgment, the ultimate limit of knowledge, the highest measure of satisfaction, and the weighty occupant of the Throne."

One should beware of cutting down green trees unless it is necessary. One should also perform ablution thoroughly and perform Prayer with heartfelt glorification [of God]. One should also read the Quran and go to both *Hajj* and *'Umra*, [the major and lesser Pilgrimages to Makkah].<sup>77</sup> One should [also] preserve good relations with one's fellowmen.

It is necessary that one learn something of medicine and obtain the blessings of the traditions of Muḥammad ﷺ handed down to us concerning medicine, which Imām Abū'l-Abbās al-Mustaghfirī has collected in his book called, *The Medicine of the Prophet ﷺ* [*Tibb al-Nabī*].<sup>78</sup> Whoever looks for this book will find it.

May the blessing of God be on our Prophet Muḥammad, the seal of the noble envoys, and on his kin and his Companions, the outstanding leaders of the community, forever and ever. *Āmīn!*



## NOTES

1. The uses of knowledge here refers to acting according to what one has learned and then spreading the knowledge to others.
2. Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Farqad al-Shaybānī, legist, student of Abū Ḥanīfa, d. 804. (All the jurists mentioned in this text, with two exceptions, follow the Ḥanafite rite; so their school affiliation need not be mentioned.)
3. *Kitāb al-Akhlāq* referred to here cannot be identified with certainty. Abū'l-Qāsim al-Ḥasan al-Rāghib al-Īṣfahānī's (d. 1108) book of this title may be meant. Hājjī Khalīfa, *Lexicon bibliographicum ...*, ed. G. Flügel (London, 1835-1858), I, 200-05, where the *akhlāq* works are listed, does not help.
4. This obligation is known as *fard kifāya*.
5. "Astronomy" encompasses more than what the author may have had in mind when composing this verdict, for Muslims scholars were active in the field astronomy. It could be that the author is reacting to the possible mingling of astronomy with astrology, which dabbles in the realm of fortune-telling and divination. (Editor's note.)
6. They are areas of life that are not primary fields of study, like the *Shārī'a* and so on, but are nonetheless important since they help maintain one's ability to fulfill his quest for sacred knowledge and the fulfillment of one's religious obligations. (Editor's note.)
7. Al-Šāfi'i, founder of the Shāfi'i school of Muslim law, d. 819.
8. Abū Ḥanīfa, founder of the Ḥanafite school of Muslim law, to which

al-Zarnūjī adhered. He died in 767.

9. 'Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Farghānī al-Marghīnānī, famous Hanafite lawyer, ob. 1197.

10. *Al-Hidāya fī Furū' al-Fiqh*, a renowned work on Muslim law.

11. Qiwām al-Dīn Hammād is probably the son of the juris-consult, Ibrāhīm ibn Ismā'īl al-Šaffār, d. 1139/40.

12. Rukn al-Islām al-Adīb al-Mukhtār: al-Zarnūjī seems to refer to Rukn al-Islām Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Imāmzāda, Muftī of Bukhāra, d. 1177/8.

13. Died 795.

14. Namely: the Last Day.

15. Hammād ibn Abī Sulaymān, a teacher of Abū Ḥanīfa, d. 738.

16. 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the 4th caliph, 656-61.

17. Died 765.

18. Sufyān al-Thawrī, outstanding theologian, traditionist and jurist, d. 778.

19. al-Ḥakīm al-Samarqandī: Abū'l-Qāsim Ishāq ibn Muḥammad, judge in Samarqand, d. 953.

20. In the text these lines are quoted in Persian.

21. Literally: scholars from abroad.

22. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Arsābandī, judge in Marw, probably identical with the judge and Hanafite leader, Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, d. 1118, who is mentioned by Sam'ānī, *Kitāb al-Ansāb* (London and Leiden, 1912), foll. 25-26.

23. Abū Zayd al-Dabūsī, d. in Bukhāra, in 1039.

24. al-Ḥulwānī: Shams al-A'īmma Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥulwānī of Bukhāra, legist, d. 1056 or 1057.

25. Abū Bakr al-Zaranjī: mistake for Bakr (ibn Muḥammad) al-Zaranjī, d. 1118, of whom G. Flügel, Die Klassen der hanefitschen Rechtselehrten, Abh. philol.-hist. Kl. Sächs. Ges. d. Wiss., III (1861), 267-358, p. 304, states expressly that he studied under al-Ḥulwānī.

26. 786-809 CE.

27. al-Asma'ī, famous grammarian, d. 831.

28. Shams al-A'īmma Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī, jurist, d. ca. 1106/7.

29. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn Manṣūr al-Üzjandī, known as Qādīkhān, jurist, d. 1196.

30. Not identified.

31. Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, one of the greatest traditionists in Islam, d. 870.

32. al-Mutanabbī, d. 965, one of the outstanding Arabic poets. In the edition by F. Dieterici (Berlin, 1861), 255, 16, p. 677.

33. Ed. Dieterici, 226, 1, 2, p. 548.

34. Raḍī al-Dīn al-Naysabūrī, d. 1149; cf. Brockelmann, GAL, Suppl., I, 641, where the title is listed, too.

35. Dhū'l-Qarnayn is a man to whom God has granted knowledge and great authority in the land. His story is told in the Quran, 18:83-98. (Editor's note.)

36. Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb al-Anṣārī, student of Abū Ḥanīfa, Chief Judge of Baghdaḍ, d. 798.

37. al-Marghīnānī: fl. ca. 1203; cf. Brockelmann, GAL, I, 379.

38. Qiwiām al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Rashīd al-Bukhārī, legist, 11th cent.; cf. Flügel, loc. cit., 310, where no death date is given.

39. Yūsuf al-Hamadānī, Shāfi'īte jurisconsult, d. 1140; on him see Ibn Khallikān, Biographical Dictionary, trans. McGuckin de Slane (Paris, 1843-1871), IV, 412-14.

40. Sharaf al-Dīn al-'Uqaylī, jurist, d. 1180/81.

41. al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Sijzī, judge, referred to by Sam'ānī, Ansāb, fol. 291. The "al-Sarakhsī" of the Leip. text as well as the al-Sajzārī of the Maḥ. text are misspellings.

42. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Kāsānī: F. Abū Bakr at-K., d. 1191, a legist.

43. 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abbās, cousin of the Prophet ﷺ, d. ca. 688.

44. Abū Ḥafṣ al-Kabīr, Aḥmad ibn Fil, a student of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, fl. 800.

45. The quoted text is from a hadith of the Prophet ﷺ found in Musnad Imām Aḥmad.

46. *Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'a*: the term denotes the community of Muslims as opposed to the heretics who seceded from it; cf. Encyclopaedia of Islam, I, 1008.

47. This refers to those who hold the rational powers of man to be even greater than what God has revealed to humanity. It is the Muslim belief that man is best served when one employs his or her God-given gifts of intelligence and curiosity in seeking truth from what God has revealed to His prophets and messengers and what is recorded in His scriptures, the final one being the Quran. With this as a guiding principle, a civilization's science and art of discovery are fruitful and have purpose. There is no violent rent between man's true and wholesome nature and his intellectual constructs as a creature of the earth. (Editor's note.)

48. [Book of] Wisdom is loosely used for past revealed scriptures.

49. Shaykh al-Islām Bahā' al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il al-Asbījābī al-Samarqandī, famous Ḥanafi legist, d. 1140/1.

50. Not identified.

51. Maṇṣūr al-Ḥallāj, mystic and theologian, executed in 922.

52. Ibrāhīm ibn al-Jarrāḥ, of Kūfa, student of Abū Yūsuf, Ḥanafi judge, d. 832.

53. "Throwing of stones" refers to a rite during the Pilgrimage in which each pilgrim throws seven small stones at a series of rocky pillars at Mina (near Makkah). These pillars are symbolic of Satan. In fact, the whole rite commemorates the time and place when Abraham drove Satan away. (Editor's note.)

54. Ḥasan ibn Ziyād al-Lu'lū'ī (the Pearl-Merchant), of Kūfa, student of Abū Ḥanīfa, friend of Abū Yūsuf, d. 819.

55. Burhān al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Umar ibn Māza, legist; cf. Flügel, loc. cit., p. 311.

56. Al-Ṣadr al-Shahīd Ḥusām al-Dīn 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Umar ibn Māza, d. 1141/2.

57. Tāj al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Umar ibn Māza; mentioned by Flügel, op. cit., p. 312.

58. Rukn al-Islām Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Imāmzāda, Muftī of Bukhāra, d. 1177/8.

59. Dīwān, 248, 8, 9, pp. 649-50.

60. Arabic poet, d. 1010.

61. Ḥāṣim ibn Yūsuf is mentioned by Ibn Sa'd, Ṭabaqāt, ed. Ed. Sachau et al. (Leiden, 1905-1940), VII/2, 108, and characterized as a native of Balkh.

62. Yahyā ibn Mu'ādh al-Rāzī, celebrated preacher, d. 872.

63. al-Imām al-Jalil Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl: probably Abū Bakr M. ibn al-F. al-Kamārī, jurist, d. 981/2.

64. Well known jurist, theologian, and author (d. 1142).

65. Shaddād ibn Ḥakīm, student of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, d. between 825-845.

66. Waki' ibn al-Jarrāḥ, traditionist, d. 813; cf. Ibn Sa'd, op. cit., VI, 275.

67. Perhaps (white) hellebore, *kundus*, this being used in antiquity to cure headaches, insanity, etc.; text has *kundur*, incense plant.

68. Not identified.

69. The interpretation of this phrase is owed to Professor Nabia Abbott, University of Chicago.

70. Al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, son of the Caliph 'Alī, d. probably 669.

71. Sura 56 of the Quran.

72. Sura 67 of the Quran.

73. Sura 73 of the Quran.

74. Sura 92 of the Quran.

75. Sura 94 of the Quran.

76. Buzurjmihr, legendary vizier of the Sasanian king, Khosrow I Anūshir-wān (531-579), renowned for his wisdom.

77. On the ceremonial of the 'Umra, the Little Pilgrimage, and its relation to the ḥajj, cf. R. Paret, Encyclopaedia of Islam, IV, 1016-1018.3689080

78. Abū 'I-Abbās al-Mustaghfirī: Abū'l-Abbās Ja'far ibn Muḥammad al-Nasāfi al-Mustaghfirī, d. 1040. His *Tibb al-Nabī* was printed in Tehran, 1293 (according to GAL Suppl., I, 617). Ḥājjī Khalīfa, op. cit., IV, 132, lists it under *Tibb al-Nabawī*.



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INSTRUCTION  
of the STUDENT  
*The Method of Learning*

Imām Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybānī said:

Learn! for learning is an adornment for one who possesses it, a virtue and a prelude to every praiseworthy action. Profit each day by increasing [your] learning and swimming in the seas of beneficial knowledge. Give yourself up to the study of jurisprudence, for the knowledge of jurisprudence is the best guide to piety and the fear of God, and it is the straightest path to the ultimate goal. It is the milestone leading to the ways of proper guidance; it is the fortress that saves one from all hardships. No one is more powerful against Satan than a thousand people.

Section  
5



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